



MEETING MINUTES / 17 November 2020

****MEETING WAS CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM DUE TO COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS****

ATTENDANCE:

Present: Baldwin, Lopez, Bradley, Lardizzone, Magner, Miller, Sarg, Sutton, Showell, Camarillo

Excused: Farley, McMullen, Seppala

Guests: Jacob Dillon (Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center), Carol Erhart (DVH), Jessica Finan (Home of the Brave), Anne Kempinski (We Honor Veterans Hospice)

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS: (Baldwin) None.

MEETING MINUTES:

Prior minutes motioned to approve by Bradley seconded by Lardizzone.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:

Wilmington VAMC – Jacob Dillon, VA Public Affairs Officer

(Baldwin) Please share with the Director that we'd like him to attend the next meeting.

(Dillon) The new clinic in Dover is scheduled to open the end of December beginning of January time frame. It is flu season, getting vaccinated is the number one prevention measure. Planning how to make operational a COVID-19 vaccine. All facilities are open and will remain open for essential care throughout the pandemic. Will relay message (Baldwin) to Kane (Director VAMC).

(Sarg) Any contract updates?

(Dillon) Any care not available at the new location will be sought out in the community and Wilmington as necessary.

(Baldwin) Requests update from Kane regarding contracts before Thanksgiving.

(Lopez) Any Dover location job openings for January?

(Dillon) Will address HR on that, all job postings are posted to usastaffing.gov

(Baldwin) Do we have a parking issue update up there?

(Dillon) On schedule with expected opening March/April. Most staff park offsite to prioritize parking for veterans.

(Larizzone) Status on opening the benefits office?

(Dillon) Will follow up on that.

(Baldwin) Any Covid-19 update?

(Dillon) 11/16 there were 3 cases in hospital, 0 in our CLC, no recent losses, as cases rise, we continue testing.

(Baldwin) Thank you for your report and look forward to feedback.

Delaware Veterans Home (DVH) –

(Erhart) Currently no COVID-19 cases. In stage 2 of re-opening and have begun meal service in the dining room. Mentions possibility of change pending Governor's update later today. Department of Health gave approval 11/16 for the Dental Suite. Waiting on tent determination that may be more critical in coming months for face-to-face visits.

(Baldwin) Working now with National Guard and DAFB and should have feedback this afternoon on three tents that would be available. Will check with the State Chamber to see if they can loan some as well. Thank you and thank you for the newsletter/community outreach.

(Erhart) Will hold monthly meetings with families outside during the pandemic.

(Sarg) How often will this newsletter be printed?

(Erhart) At least bi-weekly. Sent via email, phone call, and mail. Currently, exploring the idea of providing iPads for families to have virtual visits.

(Sarg) What's the patient census now?

(Erhart) 57, 1 death (unrelated to COVID-19). Looking into re-opening other areas to resume admissions anticipated mid-January.

(Lardizzone) Can the Commission get a copy of that newsletter?

(Baldwin) Will get a copy out to all right away.

(Sarg) When do you expect to start up the admissions committee again?

(Erhart) Anticipate the first week of December.

(Camarillo) Is there still a high employee turnover and how are the veterans doing with that?

(Erhart) Consolidated three units to two and has stabilized staffing. Acknowledges high turnover and makes mention of high turnover in the industry. Veterans are content and handling the situation well. Increasing to bi-weekly orientations and being more particular in the hiring process. Promoted from within, Vanessa to be the new Director of Nursing and promoted Jeff from unit manager to ADON. Growing and mentoring managers to become leaders in the building. HR, Secretary of State's office, working jointly on staff growth and education.

(Baldwin) Thank you Carol for the brief and what you're doing.

Home of the Brave, Director Jessica Finan:

Not Present

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

(Baldwin) Introduces Anne Kempski of the We Honor Veterans Hospice program.

(Kempski) Program goal is to care for and honor those who served when they reach the end of life.

Number one goal is assisting with accessing veteran benefits. Number two is educating staff on specialized care for veterans, community outreach and providing education to them as well. Build and maintain strong relationships with the VA. Providing specialized care through Veteran-to-Veteran volunteer program, ways to celebrate and acknowledge veterans in this time. Honored more than 600 veterans since beginning program in 2015.

COVID-19 has impacted the way hospice care is provided this year. Adaptations have been made to ensure the same quality care is continued. Will continue to look for Veteran volunteers to share companionship with those in hospice care, continue community education efforts.

(Baldwin) Thanks Anne for her presentation and gives praise to the We Honor Veterans program and offers to answer any question as they arise. Next, Dave Skocik.

(Skocik) Thank you Anne so much for all you do. Thank you to all who attended the Veterans Day Ceremony last week. As for Friends, working on a letter for businesses in the area for the Trust Fund and website. Nickle Electric as an example raised over \$8,000 this past year. Addresses the issue of incarcerated veterans, one of which is due to be paroled next week and in contact. The Coalition wants to raise the issue of working with incarcerated veterans. On a personal note, thank you to the folks at the VA. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

(Baldwin) Thank you Dave.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Magner:

Interments – 92 (+8)

55 Veterans, 37 spouses

Currently have sufficient flags and one unused flagpole (Baldwin- may be used for NABVETS).

(Baldwin) Mentions meeting today at 1300 hours with Bear Cemetery.

Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Bradley:

Interments – 38 (+11) (Provided by Commissioner Magner)
26 Veterans, 12 Spouses

Health and Human Services, Commissioner Sarg:

(Sarg) Nothing to report. Comments on TBI and dementia care and services.

Legislative Affairs, Commissioner Sarg:

2021 latest legislative recommendations and concerns sent out. Intent to be signed 17 December meeting to be presented to the joint military affairs committee in January. Important to find out which legislators are on which committees/chairs/meeting schedules. We need a roster for all of them for contact and lobbying.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

DVTF Previous Month: Applications 4; Granted 3 (75%); Awarded \$7,456.53; Balance - \$75,773.52 (Matticks) Anticipate a rise in applications and a rise in requested amounts as winter comes. There will be a press briefing today regarding COVID-19 news and updates. Pending brief, will assess what needs to be done in the office and precautions to be determined. Plan to model re-opening of our resource center after public libraries. Thank you for your time.

(Sarg) Are we receiving applications from individuals with a General discharge? What are the situations we're seeing right now with an increase in DVTF requests?

(Matticks) Yes, at least two in the last month. Home repairs for the recent tornados, emergency repairs. A few others regarding heat, and they're expensive. Jobs and COVID has placed a strain on veterans with utility and medical bills. We can see the veterans are reaching out to us after the companies are no longer working with the veterans and these requests are significant. We help mitigate certain situations and do our best to assist.

(Sarg) Thank you and congratulations on your promotion to Executive Director.

(Baldwin) Thank you. Lopez would like to provide quick update on the Stand Down.

(Lopez) Liz wants to mention that 1 December is Kindness Day. DAFB will be taking up a collection for the Veterans Awareness Center and homeless veterans across the state. Next Stand Down rescheduled from April to 17 September with meetings resuming in January.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)
Not present

American Legion (AL)
Will share legislative information in upcoming department meeting.

American Veterans (AMVETS)
Not present

Commissioner Lardizzone (Disabled American Veterans - DAV)
Served 52 veterans since last commission meeting.
Department donated to the DVH Dental Suite in the amount of \$5,000
DAV Secretary reinstated on 4 November. 15 approved for disability for the month prior.
New NSO supervisor is here from Reno.

Marine Corps League (MCL)
Not present

Commissioner Sarg (Military Officers Association of America - MOAA)

No active meetings and no formal meetings for the remainder of the year.

29th of October is the Delaware Health Care forum meeting to discuss health care issues and plans.

Military Construction Breakfast held on the 23rd of November at 0900 will instead be a briefing for the base at Del Tech on zoom.

Commissioner Magner (Military Order of the Purple Heart - MOPH)

November 1st donated \$500 to Wilmington VA for holiday program.

November 14th, bi-monthly meeting agreed to support VA CBOCs with \$500 gift cards for food during Christmas holiday.

November 19th will be hosting chapter zoom meeting.

Continue to host Friday zoom meeting with veterans from Cecil (in lockdown due to COVID-19 outbreak) and Wilmington Vet Centers.

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

Not present

Commissioner Baldwin (Vietnam Veterans of America – VVA)

Chapter 850 post behind ceremony last Saturday in Dover. Thank them for that. Christmas caroling is still their plan. Most activities cancelled like most organizations. Nothing else at this time.

(At Large, affiliated with Military Order of World Wars)

Not Present

Commissioner Lopez (At Large, affiliated with Delaware Veterans)

Crisis Awareness Committee.

Benevolence sponsoring of families in need during holidays.

Thanks to Sable for Operation Gratitude for the goodie bags.

Commissioner Sutton (At Large)

Nothing to report. Continues outreach to schools and guard/reserve units in Delaware.

Camarillo (At Large)

Thank you all for this opportunity and having me on the commission.

Creating outreach venues for veterans in the community.

Younger veterans are usually the ones in need of mental health but need to focus on all veterans.

Military One Source in Delaware is a great resource here and holds a large audience.

Veterans resource event webinar from 1400-1500 on 11/18.

Brief a few weeks ago, Elks Lodge chairman is looking to help veterans financially.

If a veteran is looking at upgrading their discharge, the enrollment office can process that request.

Free legal consultations with the VA on the Facebook page.

Promote mental health awareness and get the message out.

TERM COMPLETION:

EVENTS:

Wreaths Across America (TBD)

No Christmas party

15th of December is a big meeting for proposed legislative agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Nothing to report.

NEW BUSINESS:

Nothing to report.

ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION:

Nothing to report.

SPECIAL SESSION:

Nothing to report

EXECUTIVE MEETING:

**Thursday, 10 December 2020 at 1000
Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**

NEXT MEETING:

LOCATION:

**Tuesday, 15 December 2020 at 1000
Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**